

Interviewee: MO\_02

Role: Data Policy Manager

Organisation: Met Office

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Interviewer: Paula Goodale

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Q: So I want to start by-- if you could tell me something about your role and where you fit in the structure of the Met Office and the Hadley Centre.

A: Okay, so I sit within the Public Weather Service Programme team. But my role as Data Policy Manager is a cross office role. So although I'm looking at kind of open data and those sorts of things, I'm trying to kind of cover the interests of everybody within the office, and trying to find the most appropriate policy that meets the Met Office's needs, not just PWS's needs. Which doesn't always go down well with my boss, but he understands that my role is not just about what's best for Public Weather Service, but is what's best for the Met Office.

Q: Okay, so you're part of a team that covers that a wider--,

A: No, there's a one, me, I am Policy Manager and that's it.

Q: Okay.

A: So we have a data policy steering group, and that's made up of representatives from various different business programmes, so the com--, well the Commercial Business Programme, the government services wider business programme, and the Public Weather Service. It has representatives from the research area, from our products team who are the ones that kind of take the data and put it into products and how it all gets kind of sorted. We have our Chief Information Office, who is also a Senior Information Risk Owner, sits on the board as well. And it's chaired by the Government Services Director, and he is responsible for data within the office.

Q: Okay, but they're all internal people are they not?

A: They're all internal people. And the group was set up, and my job probably about two years or so ago. Up until that point there had been no kind of formal policy decision joined up making. People did what they thought was appropriate.

Q: Yeah. So what triggered that? Was it a change in the landscape?

A: It was basically the drive for open data, and PWS were being pressed to release all of their-- what was on the website that needs to be open data-- you need to make all your data open.

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And we realised that as a trading fund that causes us issues because if we provide the data for free then it's very difficult to not only sell the data, but also it means that you're opening up a huge amount of competition, they're getting the data for free to—[Section removed on request of interviewee].

Q: Yes well, open data is one of the ones I want to really focus on so I'll come to that in a minute.

A: And we also then found that actually not only was it because of this proliferation, and the competition, and those sorts of things, but there was also things like making sure that we were actually complying with the reuse of public sector information, and were complying with competition law. [Section removed on request of interviewee]. And then there were things like our warnings, which we have said are most definitely managed data. So we've divided our data.

So open data is under OGL terms and conditions. Managed data doesn't necessarily mean paid for, but it means that we will control it in some way. The terms and conditions might be different, it might be because it contains somebody else's data, and they've put restrictions on us. Or somebody's asked for a dataset to be created, and they've said they want a certain attribution statement that would be different than our standard open data.

Q: So would they be mainly external clients?

A: So they might be external clients. You've got a lot of the Hadley Centre stuff being done. They use a lot of data from other people, and because of the way their policies work within their countries they are happy to provide the data for doing research and science, but they don't want it used for commercial exploitation. And obviously, once it's open data it can be used for anything. So it's just making sure that we're appropriately using the data as we should.

So our national severe weather warnings are managed data. To make sure that we have a consistent coherent message so if there is a warning out everyone gets the same message, and understands what they need to do therefore.

Q: So it was set up relatively recently because there was a kind of a bit of a void there in terms of having a consistency and a clear message. What are your specific goals there?

A: So it's basically to have an effective decision making process, so that when somebody says oh can I give this data to that person over there? We either have the policy that exists that says yes or no, or we understand how we're going to make a decision about it. And that's really been what I've been working on over the last two years of trying to get that kind of decision making framework in place.

Q: Yeah. And is that starting to see results now?

A: Yes. It's really exciting [laughter]. When two years ago people used to come to me and say, "Can I do this?" I'd go, "You're going to have to go to the Data Policy Steering Group." Now I can go, "Ah, right okay, well we made this decision on this date, this is the policy that we've agreed. Yes you can do this. No you can't do this." And if I say no and they go, "Oh I really want to be able to do this." I go,

“Well, we’ll have to take that to the Data Policy Steering Group then because that’s a change in policy.”

So yes, we are starting to get that form. What we’re still doing is still quite tactical decisions where we’re looking at one thing on its own. And what we’ve said is that really we need to be looking at more sort of road mapping stuff. So what are we going to be doing in 12 months time, in 18 months time? And how does that impact decisions that we’re making now in terms of what we’re going to release? And it means that we can actually then do proper planning around it. So that’s kind of the next step.

Q: Good. Okay, so looking at some specific kind of policy areas then, I want to start with open data because that’s the big one isn’t it. What sort of data do you make open at the moment? And why have you chosen those particular datasets?

A: So our open data is the data that’s on our website. So that is our weather forecast data that’s paid for by the Public Web Service, which also includes some climate data as well, so we have things like the anomalies and averages, and those sorts of things, they are also considered open data. So that was agreed with the Cabinet Office probably about two, two and a half years ago because we needed to somehow scope and we said well, if it’s on our website and people are using it then that would seem like a reasonable kind of boundary of what is open data. One of the things that we weren’t happy with though is that data.gov.uk had been set up, and they were going to make it available, and you can download a CSV. And we said that’s really not, that’s certainly with the forecast data if we’re making this data open because it’s about supporting economic growth. Because really it’s not about transparency. Because you’ve got the kind of the two, transparency or economic growth. Ours is very much about economic growth. You need an API, you need the Application Programming Interface because you need people to be able to have it in real time and just automatically get hold of the data they need. So we put in place something called DataPoint, and that’s now our focal point for our open data for those that want to use it real time in a kind of an operational status.

Q: Okay, and is that similar datasets to the ones that were originally classed as open or is it?

A: So what we did was we said, here’s our website, these are the open data, and then we put them on to put them on to DataPoint. So at the moment it doesn’t include the NCIC gridded data because they don’t get updated as regularly, so you don’t really, you haven’t got that need for the automated interface. Whereas when you’re doing three hourly site specific forecasts that are updated hourly. You need something that’s going to, you can interface with.

Q: So it’s the forecast data that sum up the climate?

A: So climate data is on our website, and that’s open data, but it’s not in Data Point. So the stuff that’s on Data Point is the stuff that is the kind of, it’s updated in real time, and it’s much more sort of, I think the velocity of it, of it’s changing-- it’s appropriate to have it as an application programming interface initially. But what we are doing now is moving so that everything will be available through the API

'cause obviously, we need to comply with INSPIRE compliance and those sorts of things. We have a kind of a road map of what we're doing now.

Q: Okay. Do you have a feel for who's using that DataPoint service at the moment?

A: Yes because we've said the data is open, you can do what you like with it, but you're registering for the service of being able to use the API. So they have to register using a user name and email address. So I can get stats of, generic stats of what data is being requested. And I can see because they have to have a key, you know, the API key to use the data, I can see which users are using which data. The one thing that we can't do all the time is necessarily tie up what they're using that data for. Sometimes you can because if they've been sort of fairly open and honest, well not honest, but if they've been fairly open about what they're using it for there will be kind of a company name, or a website name that they'll actually tell us about, and we can link the two together.

But because the registration is more about operating the service rather than what are you using the data for, we can't always tie the two together. So we can see there's a user using data, but actually, we haven't been able to deal with you know, you kind of do your sort of Friday afternoon Google searching-- haven't been able to find any mention of that use within--,

Q: So you're not asking for any detailed information about who they are and what they intend to?

A: No. No. I did do a survey last summer. Because the Public Weather Service Customer Group had paid for Data Point to be put in, and we said that was because that was how you were going to, you know, that would be the best way to do it. And so they kind of wanted a feel for who was using it and were they making any money out of it if it really was about economic growth. And out of--, so I probably had about 4000 registered users at the time, with probably around 500 of them actively calling data, and 176 responded to the survey. And they gave me information about, you know, what sort of thing were they using it for.

Q: Is it getting processed into new products and services? Or is it being used operationally? Is that something you can--,

A: So a real mix of different stuff. And I can give you a copy of the report because it's--,

Q: That would be really interesting actually, yeah.

A: I've done some case studies, and it's got some sort of generic information on there. So yeah, that will provide good information on that. So then we have--, so we've got one guy who we've had a lot of dealings with sort of since we went live. And he's got an app called Scope Nights. He was made redundant and, at kind of probably the same sort of time we introduced Data Point, and he's using data from other places as well. He was an interest in astronomy, and an interest in weather, and went

oh I know what I'll do, I'll design an app for when's the best time to get your telescope out. So it gives you a five day forecast, red, amber, green, of kind of the cloud-- of whether it's going to be cloudy or not, as to whether or not you're actually going to see any stars. And he sells that for, I think it's something like £2.99. And he uses lots of other people's data as well, so it can be, it's sold worldwide. But he uses Met Office data as well, and you know, was really happy when we made this data available to him.

We've got another user, they do parts for oil rigs that have to be tested, calibrated in a vacuum. So they have to know what the pressure levels are--, So they can calibrate-- so they have an instrumentation within their own workshop, but they also then take the DataPoint feed because they happen to have an observation point that's only about a mile away. And they also use that as well, to kind of almost calibrate their instrumentation to make sure that what they're doing is correct.

And there's a lot of people, so there's kind of putting data on to digital signs. Those sorts of things, websites-- A lot of private personal websites, or club website type stuff, apps, all sorts of different stuff.

Q: Do you get many big commercial users, or do they come to you in a separate way?

A: So we know that there are a few commercial users. But they don't tend to--, if they have an account manager 'cause they're buying other stuff as well, then the account manager has kind of dealt with them so we know that they're using it. But to be honest, there could be lots of other big users out there, but we don't necessarily know who they are.

Q: So I know essentially the principles of open data, but are there any restrictions on what people can take from DataPoint, how often, that kind of thing?

A: So we have fair use policy. So because it's open data, and therefore you know, you could call it quite a lot of times. And we know that you can--, so the kind of two modes of operation is that for a user to come in, call the data, locally host it, and then expose it for whatever they want to use it for from locally hosted. Or that they will provide a kind of a window that will allow people to come in, call for specific data that they use their app or whatever to call that data, but then they call the data from our servers. And we have one user that has said that's how I want to operate, and therefore I know that my usage is going to be over and above the fair use policy. I think most people tend to do the kind of the call the data to a local server, and then expose it from their local server.

Q: Rather than from your--,

A: Rather than doing calls back to ours. But that--,

Q: So it's more about the kind of computing load than--,

A: Yeah. So it's a computing load rather than-- Other than that they can do what they like with it. And actually, the more innovative and interesting the better. I get really depressed when I see bog standard apps that just look like ours. That's not what it's for, we're doing that do something nice.

Q: Are there any data are specifically not made open, are there any particular--,

A: Warnings. So the warnings are not, and where we have really large volumes because actually, it's just not appropriate to make that open. There is a substantial cost to us in making the data available. And we have a set of open data criteria, which I can give you as well.

Q: Yes.

A: Which says you know, it's got to be PWS funded. There has to be a demand for it, so if you get really niche data and you've got one person who wants it that's not going to be open data. We need to have it as a consistent data set, so that's why we've kind of gone with what was on the website because that's what's termed as our best data, so it's consistent across the board of all the different elements to it, of all the different products that are there. It has to be affordable. And we have to kind of know that it's going to be there for a while, so we know that we're not in six months time going to deprecate it 'cause there's no point in putting it up there if in six months time we're going to take it off again. So there's eight criteria, of which that's kind of a few of them. There's a couple more in there as well.

Q: And you said some of the climate data is specifically not put there?

A: So it's not put on DataPoint, but it's still open data. But it's just because we go through a process of adding stuff, so we're doing a project at the moment, which is our national archive. So we are a place of deposit for physical assets, we've got an archive over the road with all our bits of paper. And in about the '70s/'80s we started moving over to electronic data, so we're now all of our observations and stuff is created electronically, and we store it electronically. Well under the Public Records Act we have to make that data available to others, in the format that it was created. And at the moment we don't.

So we've had a--, we started the project--, the project kind of started probably about three or four years ago, but it was a kind of a they were sort of thinking about it how we're going to do this. And over the last year and a half we've kind of gone right, okay now we're going to work it out. So we've been working with the National Archive up in Kew to say right okay, we've got a set of ISO standards we need to comply with. So we're now doing a piece of work that all of our climate archived observations, and some of the forecast data as well, will be made available, not necessarily as open, but they will be made available for others for reuse.

Q: Yeah, okay. And that's going to be all electronic and--?

A: Yeah. So the idea is, is we have a user interface and we'll also have APIs, because this will then be our mechanism for INSPIRE compliance. So we'll need to have the discovery view and download services.

Q: Yeah. And how far back will it go do you think?

A: It will go back to whatever data we are holding digitally. The project won't digitise data to put into it. It will just provide the data that's already digital. So it will be kind of 1970s for the sort of the earlier stations that moved over to electronic equipment, through to I think it was like mid '80s the last sort of paper records were finished. And we'd, well everything was over electronically.

Q: Hmm. Okay. So would you say that your open data policy has been driven by government, or have you had lots of input into how it's been formed and--?

A: We were given, so the Public Weather Service has a customer supplier agreement. And each year they agree a series of milestones to be delivered during the year. Usually they're around things like developing content on the website, or for our emergency responder community. So providing services to them. 2012, where are we now? '11/'12, '12/'13. '11/'12 we had a mandatory milestone, it's the only mandatory milestone they've ever had, was to provide a report of what is open data in the context of the Public Weather Service. And so that's when we came up with these are our criteria, this is the data that we're going to make available, and this is how we're going to manage it going forward. So we wouldn't have chosen to have made data openly available specifically had it not been for the government's drive for open data and the way that that was going.

Q: And was that part of the Public Data Group?

A: So yes. So PWSCG had a seat on the--, not so much the Public Data Group, Data Strategy Board. So PWSCG chair sat on the Data Strategy Board, and there was very much a drive from the Open Data User Group for kind of our data being made available. The PDG is more about us working with the other three organisations-- to sort of share lessons and learn from each other about how do we do it. And can we learn from each other on, you know, and sort of agree together right okay, yes we'll do this.

Q: Hmm. And are you finding it useful? Are there any others that are particularly relevant to you?

A: That's one of the issues, when you have Met Office, Land Registry, Companies House, And Ordnance Survey, their data, Ordnance Survey there are similarities with, but Companies House and Land Registry, their data is so different from ours. I think they have something like 92 datasets. And Companies House, and they also have quite a different, their remit in what they have to do in terms of, you know, we're a trading fund, against their trading funds, but they have a certain amount of money they use for their statutory duty, and they're set up and their governance is different to the way that we do it. And they don't update in the same time scales as we do. And they're not creating--, I think one of the problems that we have with the Met Office is that we collect data, which is our

observations, but then we do stuff to it, and our reason for being is not collecting data. Our reason for being is making forecasts.

Q: Yeah. Sort of producing the information and the knowledge.

A: And producing the information and the knowledge, and providing that service to the public. Which is very different to taking people's company's names and addresses and managing that, or managing whether you own a bit of land. It's a very different reason for having that data and collecting it. So although there are some things we've learned from each other, so as part of DataPoint we set up a Google Group User Forum.

We're also, of the four I think we're the only ones that get people to register for using our API. I think Ordnance Survey might. But as part of that we also set up this completely separate user forum, so you don't have to be part of Data Point, you don't have to be a Data Point user, but it's for discussing using Data Point data. And I went down to Land Registry a few weeks ago because they had open data and they were trying to engage with their users, but because they weren't registered for anybody can take it, they were kind of how do we talk to our users? How do we know what they want? How can we make sure that we're doing is what they want us to do, and you know that we can kind of, you know develop things for them? So they've then looked to do something similar, because you can have it completely stand alone, and not necessarily know who they are.

Q: So in some ways you're kind of providing a lead to the others?

A: Yeah. But they've done things that we haven't done. So we can then learn off them. So in some cases there are, but it is quite limited. We have far more alignment with people like the Environment Agency, the BGS, the CEH where they're working on environmental data. So yeah, our PDG is a bit of a weird conglomeration of people.

Q: Okay. So I want to move on to the Reuse of Public Sector Information.

A: Okay.

Q: Okay. You have options to charge under that don't you? So can you tell me something about how you kind of make decisions on that? You know, what you charge for, what you don't charge for. And kind of how those charges are set. Is that something that you can discuss?

A: To a certain extent, yeah. But I'm not as familiar with the kind of the price, once we've decided it's charged for then I don't kind of get into how that happens. That's done by other people. So we have, the Reuse of Public Sector Information--, so we have our raw model data, and obviously, the observations that we have, and that underpins our public weather service outputs. So for us that forms our requirement for what we need to make available. That's big datasets, you know, they're being updated four times a day or more, and that's significant volumes of data. And we are struggling a bit at the moment because our models have got so big and so detailed, but the volumes have



increased quite significantly. And we're now trying to work out how are we actually going to make all of this data available appropriately, now and in the future. So we're going through a piece of work on that. But all of that's charged for. But they pay for the fact that not, they don't really pay for the data as such. They pay for the service that goes with it.

Q: Okay. So how would you define that in terms of--,

A: So the paying for it based on the op--, so the operational suite is creating the model. And then it gets to a point in the processing chain and we go right, anything from there on in is particular to them getting that data. So they'll pay for those steps in the processing chain. Creating it in the format that is appropriate for them to get it, the message switching to get it to them, so the network charges and those sorts of things. We have an account manager that manages them getting it, and we have a kind of service charge, to make sure that if they have a problem with it they can call in, and those sorts of things. So the charges are around that, rather than the actual creating data.

Q: So actually service delivery. Are there any kind of customisations or--

A: No, there used to be. And we've been over--, we have a wholesale manager who looks after--, so our reuse of public sector information is handled by our wholesale manager, because it's wholesale data. Big chunks. So we refer to it as if you go to somewhere like Makro or somewhere like that You buy a tray of big tins of beans, and we're not going to split the tray up. You can buy it like that. If you want to buy a ladle of beans as if you were in a café, then that's what commercial do. So if you just want to buy one tin of beans that's your little corner shop, that's what commercial do. So wholesale is here it is, it's a standard package take it or leave it. If you don't want it like that then we'll offer you a commercial service to split it down and to bespoke it and create it in the way that you want it.

Q: Yeah. And so you're giving over quite sizeable chunks of data, which presumably then puts you in a relatively competitive environment?

A: Yes.

Q: And you've got the data, they've got the data.

A: But then that's the whole point of reuse of public sector. Well, that's where you've got the reuse of public sector information, and the competition law, and they kind of sit side by side. So our commercial department pay the same as anybody else would for using that data. So there's an internal data charge for them using that data.

Q: Yeah. So are there any restrictions on use of that data in a commercial context?

A: Yeah. So if we said it was open data then, obviously, they can resell it and do what they like with it, and we would--, so we would--, it would mean that we'd end up with other people reselling it, and then you're going to go well, why am I buying it because they're buying it and then selling it on. So the terms of conditions are the standard terms and conditions, so it's for they'll either have it for internal

business use, or they'll have it for external business use. So they'll have things like sort of, I think they're sold like broadcaster fee type stuff. So being able to publish it on the Internet and those sorts of things. And those kind of restrictions are put in appropriately, and there are some elements of sort of pricing around that. But I'm not completely familiar with that exactly. But it's part of, so the Met Office is part of something called ECOMET.

Q: Okay, yes I've heard of that.

A: So ECOMET is where you have all the different European met services, and we have agreed a way of pricing, so our pricing is based on that. So although that could seem anti competitive, the idea being is that it wasn't anti competitive because we'd all agree that this was an appropriate way of pricing for that data. So it didn't matter who you went to, you'd get the same price. So that we didn't end up trying to undercut each other, or you know, or well actually, we'll all agree a kind of a really high price kind of thing. So it's an agreed pricing standard.

Q: Is that across--,

A: It's across--,

Q: EU?

A: It's across all the European met services that are part of ECOMET.

Q: Yeah. Okay. That's interesting actually that it's set outside of the UK, that sort of the--,

A: Well, it's kind of we are part of the group that creates, so yeah.

Q: Yeah. I mean it makes sense in many ways.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So again, are there any particular datasets that go through this kind of charging scheme? Are there any that are kind of decided that no actually that's something that we'd keep for ourselves? Is everything available or is, you know, are there areas that are just not available because they're too critical to what you do?

A: So the only one that I'm aware of that we definitely don't make available as wholesale is our main model, which is our atmospheric dispersion model. And one of the reasons for that is that it isn't a routine model. And therefore it's not a routine model output, so it would be very difficult to actually manage the provision of that data. It's also, it's kind of the authoritative voice type side of it, again, it's used for volcanic ash predictions, it's used for blue tongue, you know, bird flu, those sorts of things where actually, we are providing a service to government and DEFRA, and those sorts of people, so actually it's not appropriate for others to be using it and taking that model output. However, we do have arrangements where certain people can licence it for their use, but their restriction is it's for their use, it's not for provision of service.

Q: Yeah, it's not for commercial use.

A: It's not for provision of services to who we provide our services to. So for kind of government use. So you wouldn't have the likes of Meteo Group being able to suddenly set up a volcanic ash advisory service because that's kind of our re--,

Q: That's core--,

A: That's core and our remit to do that.

Q: Yeah okay, right. So can you tell me something about how reuse of public sector information fits with the information fair trading scheme? And do they kind of go along--,

A: they're kind of hand in hand.

A: So erm--,

Q: And what does it mean to you here at the Met Office?

A: So we had our audit for Information Fair Trading Scheme last September/October. So there should be a new version of the report published on their website. I did try and find it earlier when I thought it should be published and it wasn't there, but it should be there by now. And basically, you know, it kind of says well, look we are going to play fairly, we are going to try and play by the rules. And now that we're getting into this sort of rhythm of kind of making the appropriate decisions and moving forward, [Section removed on request of interviewee].

Q: Yeah. And is that kind of in line with production, with your role--,

A: Yeah.

Q: And the more kind of structured--,

A: Yeah, yeah, so that's kind of where my role sits on one side of the table going "Oh no, I really, really don't want that made available." And going, "No, I'm really sorry, but we don't actually have any choice. Reuse of public sector information, competition law that data must be available to others for reuse." And it's actually made it a lot easier, you know, having those things there. If we hadn't got those things there then we probably wouldn't release it.

Q: So I was going to say, you know, are there any elements of all of this framework that make your life easier or more difficult?

A: It makes it easier in the fact that it's an external policy that we have signed up to. So Information Fair Trading Scheme is our, us kind of signing up to kind of yes we'll do things in a certain way, and make--, and it's not just about the model data, it's about generally being fair on how we provide information. But there are obviously, you know it's legislation, we have to do this, we don't have any

choice on that. Sometimes though it's the way it's interpreted, so it's your public task. Okay well, how do we define our public task? Well, you define your public task. Okay. So now we're defining our own public task that will then be used to say whether or not we're complying with legislation or not. So in some ways, yes it is useful to have the legislation there, but then there are times when, actually, we almost have a little bit too much scope to be able to, which makes it more difficult to kind of go, no this is clearly what we need to be doing.

Q: And so, erm, it also obviously, has again sort of elements re charging for the information.

A: Yeah.

Q: If you're setting kind of what your pol--, does that mean that you can have an influence on the charging structures? Or is that--, are there constraints coming from government or how does that work?

A: No there's no, there's being no--, in terms of charging, so I think it's part of the reuse of public sector information, is that we shouldn't recharge another government body, for where the creation of the data has been paid for by a government body. So for example, our historical observations, if the Environment Agency say we'd like access to some of that historical observation data that they don't have access to, or they don't have a copy of it. We can only charge them for the extraction and the administration of providing them with that data. We can't actually charge them for the data itself.

Whereas if it was a commercial customer, then we can charge them for actually providing them with a licence to use that data. So they don't ever buy the data-- they buy a licence to use that data.

Q: Yeah. And that's done under ECOMET or is that--,

A: That's done, so that's--, so the ECOMET side would be the bulletins being sent out on an hourly basis. We don't have any historical data through our wholesale manager. There was a time when we did and it caused confusion because we have a commercial team that were also providing historical data, and the two pricing models were different. And we went this is ridiculous because actually, wholesale is not about that it's about the provision of the stuff kind of as it happens.

So we have a team that make available that commercial--, that data under commercial licence fees. We have the library and archive though, so if it's a member of the public or someone trying to do some research then they can go to the library, and the library will do that, a reasonable amount of extraction for them. And there's no charges for that. But it's done under this licence is for private and research use only.

Q: And so do you have a set of specific licences or are they made for each customer?

A: So there are standard licences. There is a standard licence for all our commercial licence payers, and they're either internal business use or external business use. And we have a catalogue that says how much you charge for different things, and different--, because obviously, you can do analysis on

top of the data, so that's all got a standard pricing structure. The library have a kind of a, this is a kind of--, it's usually a sort of up to 30 minutes worth of effort is an appropriate level of effort. But then they have standard terms that they make that available under. So where possible it's all done under standard terms and conditions. It's only really our larger contracts for bespoke services where we would potentially vary from those standard terms and conditions. Data cells tend to be standard terms and conditions.

Q: Okay. INSPIRE. So, that's got a number of things that they're trying to get people to comply with.

A: Yeah.

Q: So what are your thoughts on INSPIRE? Is it helpful? Is it--,

A: Yeah, I mean a lot of the move at the moment is about releasing the data, it's about being able to create a mash-up, and big data, and analytics. So having something like INSPIRE, as long as it's appropriate to our data, and because meteorological forecast data is different in nature to a lot of other data with not only the temporal bit being the--, so you issue a forecast, but your forecast then has various different time elements to it. It's the date that it was issued, the date that it's valid for, and then you have forecast time steps going out, you know, five days or whatever. So it makes it quite difficult when every one else is just going this is the data and this is the time that it was created, and therefore that's when it's valid. And you go well, that's great that's only one time thing, we need more than one time thing. So we're working with the relevant bodies that are trying to develop the standards for INSPIRE. But yes our--,

Q: So is there a Met specific bit to INSPIRE, or is there--?

A: I think what we're trying to do is develop the INSPIRE standard so that we can use them. So I don't think it's Met specific, it's more about where you're producing data that has more than one temporal axis-- Then you can use this data, rather than it being weather specific.

Obviously, we also deal in levels of information rather than just at the ground. A lot of other people generally their information is kind of at ground level. But we have just started a programme of work of which INSPIRE is one of the strands for that for making sure that by 2020 we are, you know, compliant with INSPIRE, as we should be with the various milestones as we go forward. And we've decided that yes okay, INSPIRE's only supposed to be about your public task, but actually well, it makes sense to actually do it across everything, as long as it's appropriate to do it. So if it's not public task then we might--,

Q: So and your underlying motivations for that are?

A: Is being able to interoperability with other organisations, the ease of reuse for other people. And we have influenced the standards so that they are appropriate to what we want to use them for, so it

would make sense for us to use them because we think that that is the right standard to create the data in.

Q: Right, yeah. So interoperability, data sharing is something that's--,

A: It's very, yes it's--, but I mean we have a programme of work called the Environmental Sciences Services Project, or programme. So it's basically it's where we're working with other government organisations that have environmental data. Well, if we all agreed that we're working with INSPIRE compliance then we don't need to sit down and work out our own set of standards that we're all going to use 'cause we just go we're all going to use INSPIRE, and therefore by its very nature we should all be interoperable. So we can work with each other's data, but we can then also then go right okay, you Mr Blogs over there you can use any of our data, and once you know how to use one lot of data you'll be able to use any of our data because it's all provided in the same standard.

Q: And do you think it's also creating opportunities for the use of the data?

A: Yeah because if you can--, I mean our data can be quite difficult to work with, but at least if you've got one bit that you kind of know what you're doing with it, then actually the rest of it should come far more easily. So yeah, I think the reuse of our data will improve with-- people aren't--, what we're finding with the Data Point stuff is that actually, there's an awful lot of people that aren't weather experts, they just wanted access to weather data easily to incorporate into whatever they were doing. So there's an awful lot more people out there using weather information than might have done previously.

Q: And it's also then supporting the kind of the more, erm, so government use of the data--

A: Yeah.

Q: Commercial use of the data--

A: Yeah.

Q: And creating new services.

A: Yeah. And it should make it easier for us to actually create and build products and services because actually, we're then basing it on standards. Rather than every time we want to do a new product we set up a new data feed that goes all the way through all the production systems. It actually, it's much easier for us to set up services as well.

Q: Great. I'm kind of getting to the end of what I need to ask you. Is there anything else that you think would be useful for me to know about? The kind of policy environment in the Met Office?

A: The only other thing is things like information asset owners. So we are going through a process now, we had information asset owners, for various reasons the people that were responsible for it moved around, moved away, and so it had kind of had a bit of a lull, but that's being, it's sort of

reinvigorated. And the whole exploit protect element of what you have to do for information at asset ownership is now kind of happening. So with the work that I'm doing on managing data effectively that side of things, and actually having people who own the data and will make the decision. So actually making the decision should become easier, because we will have owners of particular datasets. Whereas at the moment we have one person looks after all of our meteorological operational data.

Q: Right, so will that be individuals? Will that be teams?

A: It will be one individual who will be the owner. But then they will have people that we're referring to as guardians that will work with them to provide the advice because even the way we split it that's still a huge amount of data that they're kind of covering.

Q: And how will that work with kind of datasets where you collaborate externally?

A: So the information asset owner will still have ultimate responsibility for the way that that's being used. Even if it's kind of incorporating other people da--, but that comes then down to the fact that it's managed data. If you've got somebody else's data as well as our data-- It's managed data, we'll know that we've got somebody else's, we'll understand what the licence terms are for using it, and they'll all-

Q: Yeah. I'm thinking about, you know, some of the Hadley sets where they collaborate with other climate scientists and different sources.

A: Yeah, they're all managed. And in the most cases we kind of know what we're allowed to do with it, but we've kind of erred on the side of caution until we've really unpicked it all.

Q: Do you have any constraints from external partners, or are you kind of generally kind of in the lead position when you're collaborating?

A: No, certainly with the Hadley type stuff where it is about research, and I said before, you know there are countries out there that don't want their data used, exploited commercially. A good example of that is actually not on the research side, but actually we've been working sort across European organisations for something called Opera, which is a composite radar product. So basically you feed in all the radar data from all the different European countries that have radar data, and you can create a radar picture. That is actually kind of consistent across the board, rather than having to understand how each individual country's radars and pictures are presented, it kind of standardises them. One country does not want their radar data used in commercial products, and therefore where it's provided as a commercial service through the ECOMET wholesale catalogue. their data has to be extracted. So we actually have to have two versions of it. One which can be shared around all the national met services so that they can have this broad radar picture, and one we can use to sell to other people.

Q: Okay. So there are kind of limitations, and you're just kind of--,

A: And we work with them-- as we need to, yeah.

Q: Is that landscape changing? Are people becoming more agreeable to sharing, you know, globally?

A: In some cases we're--, I mean the EC have various projects, they want all their data open. That obviously, causes us problems because a lot of the data they want open we wouldn't have made open. So we need to work out how we're going to work with that. And in other cases where we would be happy to sell the data other people don't want it sold. So it's kind of--, it's different axis as to whether or not we're the ones kind of going no, or whether it's somebody else going no. It's unpicking it all is the problem.

Q: Do you just kind of do that on a case by case basis or is it--,

A: To a certain extent, which I try and do more strategically. Right okay, we know that EC want to deal with majority of--, with all their data as being open if they've paid for it to be created. Right okay. And that's kind of the next thing on my list of things to sort out. But generally you get down to what's the parameter? What's the time step? What's the location? And it really is that level of detail, you can't just go oh it's this dataset here, you really have to go down to real levels of detail. Not through choice, but I have probably an anal amount of knowledge around the valid data that we have in the organisation [laughter]. Just because I've had to in order to be able to then split it all up and go right okay, what is it all and how is it getting to people, and exactly what is it we're talking about here. Because that difference between, even down to the points of a degree. So you know, do you actually provide decimal points or not? You know, it's that level of detail that in certain cases we have to go down to in order to make a decision about whether it's open or managed or research.

Q: And are there equivalents of you in other national met services or are you kind of a unique commodity at the moment?

A: I don't know about other national met services, I have met kind of people that are doing similar roles in other organisations, like the Environment Agency and that sort of thing. I haven't met equivalents. But then I think around the national met services the Met Office is more unique because of the fact that we are a trading fund. So most national met services they're just about public task, so it's much more cut and dried. And they don't have this, you know-- providing products and services and-- or if they do there's a much clearer divide potentially. You know they'll have a completely separate, a bit like the Ordnance Survey one, they have their kind of core and then they have the commercial bit.

Q: Yeah. So that gives you an opportunity to kind of lead in some of those areas.

A: Yeah. It just makes it more complicated [laughter].

[END OF INTERVIEW]